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**A LETTER FROM THE PUBLISH**

Cloaks, daggers, clandestine cash, and spooks were the agenda last week as the U.S. and the world asked new questions about CIA operations. The TIME correspondents dispatched to report on our cover story had an old acquaintance with the curious ways of intelligence operators, both foreign and domestic. "I've spent much of the last five years of my journalistic career worrying about spooks of one stripe or another," says Washington Correspondent Stanley Cloud, who in 1969-70 served in our Moscow bureau. "There the problem was the



TALBOTT

KGB," recalls Cloud. "We worried about phone taps, room bugs, whether we were being followed and just who among the Russians was and was not an agent." Cloud's next assignment helped give him background for this week's cover subject: "In Southeast Asia, it was not the KGB but the CIA that was a concern of most journalists. In Laos, where the CIA conducted a secret war, our every move was known and, we assumed, plotted on some map somewhere. The CIA was everywhere, but claimed to be nowhere."

For State Department Correspondent Strobe Talbott, who contributed the main part of the story, the CIA was suddenly right there last week when Director William Colby granted TIME a rare on-the-record interview. This was quite a departure for the former Eastern European correspondent, who spent several years steering clear of all contact with the CIA. He explains: "In the Communist countries, Western newsmen are widely regarded by local authorities as licensed spies. That made us all the more chary about getting near the agency and its outposts, even for the legitimate purpose of seeing what the CIA was up to."



MERRICK

Our account of CIA involvement in Chile was written by Associate Editor Edwin Warner and reported mainly by Washington's Latin American specialist Jerry Hanniffin, with supplementary material from London Correspondent William McWhirter and Buenos Aires Bureau Chief Rudolph Rauch, who covered the overthrow of Allende. While reporting from Chile last year at the time of the truck drivers' strike before the coup, Rauch had asked a group of truckers who were enjoying a hearty barbecue on the tailgate of one of the vehicles blocking the road leading into Santiago just where they had got the money for such a feast. "From the CIA," was the laconic reply, and the incident was included in our Sept. 24, 1973 story. What seemed like a joke then has since turned out to be more than that. Some of the truck drivers may indeed have been getting money from the CIA.

In New York, Reporter-Researcher Sarah Bedell queried academics on the role of the CIA and checked the main story, which was written by Associate Editor Frank Merrick. Although a former correspondent, Merrick had never had an encounter with the CIA. "But then, being in the Boston and Chicago bureaus, I wouldn't have," says Merrick. "At least I don't think so."

*Ralph P. Davidson*